



State Capitol
Lansing, Michigan 48913
517/373-7888
1-888-937-4453
517/373-2983 (fax)
sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov

GILDA Z. JACOBS
MICHIGAN SENATE
ASSISTANT DEMOCRATIC FLOOR LEADER
FOURTEENTH DISTRICT

Committees
Economic Development, Small
Business and Regulatory Reform VC
Families and Human Services VC
Government Operations
Health Policy

The Jacobs Report

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, August 15, 2003

CONTACT: Matt Levin
(517) 373-7888

TERM LIMIT EXTENSION CONSIDERED, DROPPED

Wednesday, the House of Representatives postponed action on a proposed constitutional amendment that would loosen term limits, extending them to twelve years in each chamber (six terms in the House, three in the Senate). The issue was the subject of a ninety-minute private Republican caucus and a relatively brief Democratic caucus following the single-day session.

Although legislators on both sides of the issue said there would have been enough votes in the House to pass a proposal asking voters to ease term limits, House Speaker Rick Johnson (R-LeRoy) said it would have been "pretty rushed" to get the issue on the November ballot.

"I'm not writing off any change, but it's a much bigger hill to climb," Mr. Johnson said, adding that a vote in a special spring election remains possible.

Democrats have generally opposed term limits but were hesitant to move, in part out of concerns that extending term limits would help cement the current Republican majority, and because of apathetic public support.

The issue has been wrapped in the political consequences of making a change in the term limits at this stage when Republicans dominate the Legislature and one Democratic source said the GOP is engaging in self-serving politics to now push for relaxing limits. "[Term limits] were a dumb idea to begin with," the source said. "They used term limits to get rid of our majority and now they want to change it to guarantee their own majority."

Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema (R-Grandville) asked Senate Democratic Leader Bob Emerson (D-Flint) this week to poll his caucus on the term limit issue, but there was no Democratic sentiment to run the issue during this November's municipal election. Emerson said he opposed term limits when it was approved by the voters in 1992, but thinks an extension proposal would face a "whopping defeat" if voters revisited the issue this year.

SENATE OKS UNEMPLOYMENT EXTENSION

Some 53,000 jobless workers in Michigan could be eligible for an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits under a bill approved unanimously by the Senate Wednesday.

--more--

The chamber passed HB 4945 on a 38-0 vote and returned it to the House for presentation to Governor Jennifer Granholm, who is expected to sign the bill soon.

Under the bill, the state would use \$26 million from its trust fund to leverage another \$180 million from the federal government to provide the additional 13 weeks of benefits largely for those workers who have run out of their current 26-weeks of benefits or are nearly to do so.

Michigan qualified under the federal proposal because its unemployment level has exceeded 6.5 percent for the last three months.

Business groups had opposed the bill, saying it was unfair to approve an increase in benefits for jobless workers without also providing some additional relief for businesses.

DEMS PITCH HOSPITAL REFORM PACKAGE

Thursday, legislative Democrats pitched a hospital reform plan that would mandate nurse-to-patient ratios and force hospitals to open up their financial records.

The effort was spearheaded by Rep. Jack Minore (D-Flint) and Sen. Gilda Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods) as a way to improve the quality of care in Michigan hospitals.

The Jacobs bill (SB 669) calls for hospitals to come up with a yearly staffing plan based on each hospital's projections and require those units to maintain an appropriate nurse-to-patient ratio. The level of nursing care would be based on the severity of the illness and what is entailed in treating the illness.

Jacobs said that low staffing levels are compromising patient safety and that recent national studies show that understaffing is a contributing factor in higher accidental patient deaths and injuries in hospitals.

"The nursing shortages we are currently experiencing in our hospitals are not simply the result of a lack of qualified nurses," Jacobs said. "Our hospitals are short-staffed because nurses are being spread too thin and are not able to provide the high quality of care they are trained to deliver.

"These working conditions create high turnover among nurses who simply want to provide the level of care each patient requires and deserves." SB 669 would also provide a mechanism protecting the identities of persons who report hospital violations to the Department of Community Health. "People reporting dangerous situations shouldn't have to fear retribution against their hospitalized loved ones," said Jacobs.

State Senator Gilda Jacobs represents the 14th Senate District, which includes Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Franklin, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township, Southfield, and Southfield Township. She is the Minority Vice Chair of the Families & Human Services Committee and the Economic Development, Small Business & Regulatory Reform Committee. She also serves on the Government Operations and Health Policy Committees.

Constituents of the 14th District may contact Senator Jacobs at sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov or toll-free at 1-888-937-4453.

This newsletter is produced in single-space form in order to save paper and transmission costs.

####